



January 26, 2007

Honorable Senator Dan Weinberg, Chair
Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety Committee
Montana Senate
Capitol
Helena, MT 59620

PUBLIC HEALTH, WELFARE & SAFETY

Exhibit No. 9

Date 1-31-07

Bill No. SB 142

RE: Support for SB142 with amendments


Dear Senator Weinberg:

The Missoula City-County Board of Health and Department support SB 142 with the amendments proposed by the local public health officers. I find the most important provisions of the amended bill to be that it:

- Allows health care workers holding only out-of-state professional licenses to respond to a public health emergency in Montana thereby making a critical resource available to our state; and,
- Compels DPHHS in coordination with state and local DES and local public health to develop a state-level public health emergency plan and incorporate that plan into state emergency plans provided for in Title 10, MCA. The fact that current law **allows** such a plan is not the same as **assuring** that a sound public health emergency plan becomes a reality. The decades-long reprieve this nation has had from a large scale public health emergency such as pandemic influenza leaves us insufficiently experienced and insufficiently prepared for this type of possible calamity in the modern day; and,
- Connects and clarifies the roles of public health and DES in existing Titles 50 and 10 MCA, respectively, without diminishing the authorities of either.

I was a strong proponent of the bill in its original form. The work of compromising in order to better accommodate key parties has actually strengthened my support for an amended SB 142 because it reflects the great extent to which many of us wish to pull in the same direction and get this work accomplished.

Sincerely,


Ellen Leahy, R.N., M.N.
Health Officer

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